



NEWS RELEASE

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ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS

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CHIEF JUSTICE ZLAKET AWARDED NATIONAL HONOR

PHOENIX, Arizona Chief Justice Thomas A. Zlaket brought more national acclaim to Arizona's judiciary this week when he was presented with the Chief Justice Richard W. Holmes Award of Merit from the American Judges Association (AJA). The award was made Monday in Kansas City, Missouri at the AJA's annual meeting.

The award is the AJA's highest honor and is given annually to a judge "for outstanding contributions to the judiciary." Previous recipients include Warren Burger, William Richardson, Howell Heflin and Sandra Day O'Connor. Originally the Award of Merit, the honor was renamed this year in honor of Richard W. Holmes, the former chief justice of Kansas and a founding member of the AJA.

Chief Justice Zlaket is recognized nationally as a leader in the move to improve public trust and confidence in the courts. In 1999, he served as national co-chair of a committee working on this broad issue, and was instrumental in the development and planning of the National Conference on Public Trust and Confidence in The Justice System, held in May 1999 in Washington, D.C.

He is also responsible for *Justice 2002*, the strategic agenda for Arizona's court system to be implemented during his term as chief justice. The four categories of *Justice 2002* are Protecting Children, Families and Communities; Providing Access to Swift, Fair Justice; Connecting With The Community; and Being Accountable.

Some of the accomplishments during Chief Justice Zlaket's tenure include his effort to "Fill The Gap," an attempt to reduce delay in the processing of criminal cases; "Model Court," a program now being expanded statewide to dramatically reduce the time dependent children spend in out-of-home placement; "Law For Kids," a stand-alone website (designed by young people, for young people to help them learn about the juvenile justice system; and the rebuilding and refurbishment of Arizona's juvenile detention centers, most of which were in deplorable condition until recently.

For more information on Chief Justice Zlaket or this award, contact John MacDonald at (602) 542-9656 or Shelley Rockwell (staff for the American Judges Association) at the National Center for State Courts at (757) 253-2000.

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